



PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON

## Kentucky State Police Detective Monte Owens

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**A**t 61 years young, Kentucky State Police Detective Monte Owens has experienced more in his 40-year career than most dream of, he said. Owens currently is the longest serving trooper working for KSP, and he has no intentions of leaving anytime soon. Besides being a pilot, scuba diver and having been a member of KSP's first Special Response Team, Owens is a skilled detective who has spent nearly half his career building cases to apprehend 'the monsters' that roam Kentucky communities in Post 7's 11-county region. Owens considers himself a true outdoorsman who enjoys camping and leads a Boy Scout troop in Danville. He has been married for 39 years and has two grown children.

**You don't work for the state police for the money.** When I started we made \$421 a month, but, I would have worked for free. There's something about wearing the gray; there's nothing else like it.

**Why have I stayed forever?** I don't know — I really like what I do. I'm at a point now where I know that I should be trying to teach the younger guys that are coming up. I was in uniform about 23 years, but honestly it seems like I was in the academy just yesterday. The experiences I have, I need to share those and see that these guys are good detectives and good policemen.

**I worked the marijuana detail for years.** I repelled and was a spotter. One day, every aircraft we had was broken. My sergeant asked if I would get a ground team and go over to Clay County where he said he found some dope up on a mountain.

**I ended up riding up this mountain on the back of a 4-wheeler** with another trooper and I was screaming and cussing, and he was having a blast. We finally reached the top and there was a marijuana patch above us and one below us. I said, 'I'll go up and get the one on top and you get the bottom one.'

**I have this thing about ticks.** I do not like ticks. I came out from cutting this marijuana patch and there were literally hundreds of ticks crawling on me, and I was not happy. I jumped up on the 4-wheeler, and they were so thick, I was literally scraping them off with my knife.

*“This life is not a dress rehearsal, we need to do what we can do and do the best we can because tomorrow is no guarantee.”*

**All of a sudden the front end of the 4-wheeler raised up and I thought, 'Oh, this ain't good.'** I leaned forward and it raised up a little more, and I literally went off the mountain on the 4-wheeler.

**I remember trying to push it away from me** and I hit on my leg and hit really hard on my pistol. I was shaken up, my uniform was torn and I was bleeding. But I was still thinking about the ticks and worried that I bent my gun.

**The other trooper came scratching up the hill to help.** When he got behind me to lift me up, and I put pressure on that leg, I threw up. I knew something was bad wrong. I looked at my knee and it was huge and swollen. I told the other trooper he needed to make a splint because I didn't want that bone coming out, and we had to figure out how to get me off the mountain.

**When I got to the hospital, the doctor said,** 'Your career is over, you'll never walk again and we'll probably have to amputate your leg.' I lost it; I was scared. Later the bone specialist said, 'I don't have enough pins and screws for your leg, so we'll just see what happens.' But a year later I came back to work.

**I became a pilot in the 1990s.** I had a little fear of heights, and I wanted to push past that. This life is not a dress rehearsal, we need to do what we can do and do the best we can because tomorrow is no guarantee.

**When I was a trooper, I came home and took my uniform off and hung it up,** and it was over for the day. But as a detective you go home and you're constantly thinking or plotting about how to get this guy or how an interview is going to work. Then you suddenly realize that what you do, if you don't do it well, you may not solve a murder case or may lose your case in court. It's constant; I wake up in the middle of the night and think about this stuff. But obviously I like it or I wouldn't still be here.

**Ernest Hemmingway had a saying,** "There is no hunting like the hunting of man, and those who have hunted armed men long enough and liked it, never care for anything else thereafter." When you talk to people and they smile and you can see them get excited when they are talking about killing and you have to sit there and smile back and act like you're getting into it, you have to be a good actor. You have to try to make them believe you're their friend and want to help them. You have to sell it, and it's hard.

**There are a lot of monsters in this world.** When you get to thinking about it — when you're sitting in a room with them, you have to be able to think like them to get them — and that's scary.

**I always try to give victims time** to talk and vent — how would you like to be a victim and have someone say, 'I don't have time to talk to you.' It'd be awful, and you should talk to them. But they do have to learn or understand at some point that time should be devoted to someone else.

**Retirement scares me.** When I was a baby trooper, they'd say you need to do this because it helps your retirement. When I started you had to retire at 55, and honestly I never thought I'd make it. Looking ahead when you're on the other side, I thought, '55 — that's 34 years — I'll get killed before then.'

**When you've done what I've done** for all these years, how do you retire and turn it off? Some say to go work somewhere else. Well who wants to hire an old state police detective that's dealt with death all his life? If you want to talk about dead bodies, I can tell you that guy's been there so many years and those bugs are that old and this guy's brains were bashed in and he was shot twice by this kind of gun — I can tell you all that stuff. But no one wants to know all that stuff. 🐛

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